



Marcia Mayeda has been the Director of Animal Care and Control for the County of Los Angeles since July, 2001. She is a Certified Animal Welfare Administrator (Society of Animal Welfare Administrators).

Growing up in Highland Park, IL and a staunch animal lover since childhood, Marcia always knew her life's work would center on animal care and protection and she pursued her love for and study of animals. She pet sat and walked the dogs of neighbors, and began a lifelong passion for horseback riding,

beginning with hunter-jumpers at age six.

One impactful event during fifth grade left a deep impression on Marcia's compassion for animals. "My friend and I stopped in the local pet store to look at the animals on our way home from school. We were horrified at the condition in which they were kept. The tanks were filthy with algae, a monkey was kept in a tiny cage too small for its comfort, the puppies and kittens were thin, and rats were abundant. The smell was horrific. I knew something had to be done, and when we reached my home I called the local humane society. A few weeks later the pet store had closed. I am so grateful that the humane society took the concerns of a fifth grader seriously, and their response showed me that advocating for animals had meaningful impacts for their well-being." As soon as she turned 16, Marcia began working for a veterinarian and continued to do so until departing for college.

In 1982 Marcia began attending Western Illinois University where she majored in Animal Science. Coming from the suburbs of Chicago, Marcia's only exposure to livestock was with horses. "Learning about cattle, sheep and hogs was fascinating for me," says Mayeda. Marcia took full advantage of the university's resources to gain as much knowledge about large animal care and herd health management. She worked for several years on the university sheep farm, was a member of the Intercollegiate Livestock Judging Team, and a member of the Hoof and Horn animal science club. Her summer jobs included working at a variety of animal care facilities.

It was while attending college that Marcia discovered how her passion for animals and knowledge she was gaining at the university would define her career path. In 1984, Marcia was told that there was an opening for a part time position at the local animal shelter. "I had never been to an animal shelter before," she states. "However, it was an opportunity to work with animals so I jumped at the chance to work there." Marcia's duties included caring for the animals in the shelter as well as patrolling the county for loose animals.

With her career set in the field of animal welfare, upon graduation Marcia took a job as an animal cruelty investigator with the Houston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Houston, TX (HSPCA). This was her first exposure to intentional and negligent cases of animal abuse and neglect, responding to approximately 20 complaints of animal abuse each day. "This was a culture shock for me," Marcia recalls. "I had never been exposed to intentional cruelty to animals before. The various emotions that this brought up – anger, sadness, and frustration – were offset by the rewarding feeling of rescuing animals from inhumane conditions and making them well again." Since that time Marcia has maintained a strong commitment to preventing and prosecuting cruelty against animals. Marcia was later promoted to Director of Shelter Operations at the HSPCA, where she oversaw the daily care of the dogs, cats and other animals cared for by the organization.

In 1989, Marcia joined the Helping Hands Humane Society in Topeka, KS (HHHS). As its executive director, Marcia initiated a number of programs such as adoption counseling, microchipping, adoption outreach, and established a formal volunteer program. She also established a dog training program in collaboration with a local women's penitentiary; a shelter dog sterilization program with Kansas State University School of Veterinary Medicine; and an adoption program for shelter dogs to be adopted by local law enforcement as drug detection dogs.

Marcia was also deeply involved in the investigation and prosecution of puppy mills. These large scale commercial dog breeding operations were notorious for the inhumane treatment and neglect of animals. Marcia worked closely with the Kansas Attorney General's office, state investigators, and other humane societies in the state, and national animal welfare protection organizations to combat the problems with the state's puppy mills. In addition to the investigation and prosecution of the puppy mill owners, Marcia's work led her to advocate on many occasions at the Kansas State Legislature for enhancing laws to protect animals in the puppy mills.

The destination for many of the puppy mill puppies was California, and Marcia began to look to California as the state where she could make a meaningful impact in animal welfare. The progressive approach to animal welfare and stronger anti-cruelty laws in California were appealing, and in 1993 Marcia joined the Humane Society of Santa Clara

Valley (HSSCV) in Santa Clara, CA as its new Director of Animal Care. HSSCV was in the beginning of a transformation to new leadership and Marcia's knowledge, skills and abilities were invaluable as the agency transitioned to a more progressive model for animal welfare. Overseeing a staff of 45 people that provided 24/7 care to 40,000 animals each year, Marcia implemented many practices to ensure the animals received the best care and opportunities for placement into new homes.

In 1996, the HSSCV's position of Director of Animal Services became vacant, and Marcia requested to be reassigned to oversee that division. The law enforcement arm of the HSSCV, the Animal Services division provided animal care and control for the City of San Jose and eight other contract cities. "I had really missed the opportunity to directly impact the investigation of animal cruelty and neglect," said Mayeda. "By now, the Animal Care department was running smoothly and I wanted to be more directly involved in the law enforcement aspect of animal welfare." As Director of Animal Services, Marcia managed 40 assigned personnel including patrol officers, dispatchers, animal cruelty investigators and administrative staff. It was during this period she developed specialized animal cruelty and code enforcement divisions, and formalized training for the officers and dispatchers. While overseeing the department, Marcia also worked to earn a Master of Nonprofit Administration degree from the University of San Francisco (USF).

Marcia was tapped to head the newly created Community Outreach department when the HSSCV decided to resign its contracts for animal control in 2000. As Director of Community Outreach, Marcia continued to oversee the retained animal cruelty investigations division, as well as the HSSCV's education, volunteer, and community outreach divisions.

In 2001, Marcia was recruited by the County of Los Angeles to become the new Director of the Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC). In July, 2001 Marcia joined Los Angeles County and, since then, has overseen the largest animal care and control agency in the United States. Providing 24/7 animal control services for all unincorporated Los Angeles County and 47 contract cities, DACC also provides care for more than 50,000 animals each year in seven animal care centers; operates two administrative facilities; and licenses more than 200,000 pets each year.

Marcia and her staff have transformed DACC from a traditional animal control operation to a progressive agency that maintains public safety and animal life saving as its top priority. She credits the outstanding work of DACC's staff and volunteers for this achievement. "Although I have established a vision of how our agency should operate, this would not be attainable if it weren't for the dedication and team work of DACC staff and volunteers. It has been so rewarding to see the outstanding improvements we have made in achieving our mission."

What is next in store for DACC? Reflecting on this question, Marcia said, “We are at a truly exciting period in the animal welfare field. Tremendous improvements have been made in our adoption rate thanks to our community partners who adopt or transfer our animals to other locations where shelter pets are in short supply; intervention programs to prevent the surrender of pets; and spay/neuter programs that prevent the birth of unwanted animals. These partnerships have reduced the numbers of animals entering our animal care centers and increased the opportunities for adoption for animals in our care. This has given us the opportunity to devote our limited resources to helping the more challenged animals be made well and suitable for adoption.”

Another area of focus for Marcia is the replacement and renovation of DACC’s animal care centers. “Our animal care centers are very old and past their useful life. They are also not designed to optimize modern day best practices in animal care. I am so grateful that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Chief Executive Office have recognized this serious need for improvement, and have allocated resources to begin the eventual replacement or renovation of the facilities.”

Marcia has been married to her husband, Vincent, since 1996. They currently share their lives with four adopted dogs and a Shire horse. In her spare time, Marcia enjoys walking their dogs, dressage and trail riding with friends.